

SHORT TITLE: Electric utilities; restructuring the electric utility industry; codification; emergency.

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 46th Legislature (1997)

SENATE BILL NO. 500

By: Easley

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to electric utilities; creating the Electric Restructuring Act of 1997; providing short title; stating purpose; stating goals of restructuring the electric utility industry; defining terms; directing the Corporation Commission to undertake certain study relating to restructuring electric utility industry; requiring Commission to develop certain framework for restructuring under direction of certain task force; prohibiting Commission from initiating actions or promulgating certain rules without authorization by certain task force or Legislature; requiring Commission to report to task force by certain date; stating legislative intent; outlining principles and directives for development of framework; directing Oklahoma Tax Commission to conduct certain study; stating purpose; creating the Joint Electric Utility Task Force; stating membership; providing for appointments; providing for chair and vice-chair; requiring recording of attendance; providing for vacancy and reappointments; stating quorum requirement; authorizing chair to call meetings; authorizing task force to appoint advisory councils; providing for travel reimbursement; providing for staff and employees; stating duties; providing for

termination of task force; providing for
codification; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 190.1 of Title 17, unless there
is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Electric
Restructuring Act of 1997".

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 190.2 of Title 17, unless there
is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

The purpose of this act is provide for the orderly restructuring
of the electric utility industry in the State of Oklahoma in order
to allow direct access by retail consumers to the competitive market
for the generation of electricity while maintaining the safety and
reliability of the electric system in this state.

A competitive and diverse retail electric market should result
in lower electricity prices for consumers, create business
opportunities, and encourage the development of increased and
enhanced services.

Monopoly utility regulation has been used as a substitute for
competition in the supply of electricity, but recent changes in the
energy marketplace and technology as well as the passage of the
National Energy Policy Act of 1992 and implementation of Order No.
888 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have resulted in
increased competition in the electric generation industry. The
introduction of retail consumer choice of electric generation

suppliers will result in market forces rather than regulation determining the cost and quality of electricity for all consumers.

Restructuring of the electric utility industry to provide greater competition and more efficient regulation is a national trend and the State of Oklahoma must aggressively pursue restructuring and increased consumer choice in order to provide electric generation service at the lowest and most competitive rates.

This act shall not interfere with nor regulate the transmission or generation or sale of electricity at the wholesale level which may be subject to regulation by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission or other federal agencies.

The primary goals of a restructured electric utility industry are as follows:

1. To reduce the cost of electricity for as many consumers as possible, helping industry to be more competitive, to create more jobs in this state and help lower the cost of government by reducing the amount and type of regulation now paid for by taxpayers;

2. To encourage the development of a competitive electricity industry through the unbundling of prices and services and separation of centralized generation services from transmission and distribution services;

3. To enable all service providers to engage in fair and equitable competition through open, equal and comparable access to transmission and distribution systems and to avoid wasteful duplication of facilities;

4. To ensure that some form of direct access by retail consumers to the competitive market for generation be implemented in the State of Oklahoma by January 1, 1999, and that all classes of ratepayers obtain the ability to exercise choice in the selection of an electric service provider soon thereafter; and

5. To ensure that current standards of safety, reliability and service are maintained in a restructured electric service industry.

It is in the best interest of the citizens of this state to efficiently and expeditiously move forward to increased competition in the generation and sale of electric energy. To ensure a successful transition to a competitive marketplace, a thorough assessment of issues and consequences associated with restructuring shall be undertaken as provided by this act.

SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 190.3 of Title 17, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

As used in the Electric Restructuring Act of 1997:

1. "Commission" means the Corporation Commission;

2. "Electric distribution system" means the physical system of wires, poles, and other equipment designed to deliver electricity to the ultimate consumer for consumption, excluding generation and transmission facilities;

3. "Public benefit programs" means all social, economic and environmental programs currently funded through rates charged to consumers receiving electric service in the State of Oklahoma;

4. "Retail electric service provider" means any firm, corporation, company, individual or their trustees, lessees or receivers, or cooperative corporation or agency, engaged in the furnishing of retail electric services in this state, exclusive of municipal corporations, or beneficial trusts thereof and the Grand River Dam Authority. Any municipal corporation or beneficial trust thereof or the Grand River Dam Authority may, through its own nonrevocable election, voluntarily become subject to the provisions of this act and thus come within the definition of a "retail electric service provider" by submitting to the Commission a certificate from its governing board stating the utility has elected voluntarily to become subject to the provisions of this act;

5. "Retail electric service" means the provision of electric distribution access over an electric distribution system from a transmission line to an end-use retail consumer; and

6. "Transmission line" means the physical system designed to transport bulk electricity between generators and electric distribution systems.

SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 190.4 of Title 17, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

To ensure an orderly and equitable restructuring of the electric utility industry in this state and achieve the goals outlined in Section 2 of this act, the Legislature hereby directs the Corporation Commission to undertake a study of all relevant issues relating to restructuring the electric utility industry in this state including, but not limited to, those issues set forth in this section, and develop a proposed electric utility industry restructuring framework for the State of Oklahoma under the direction of the Joint Electric Utility Task Force herein created. The Commission shall address appropriate steps to achieve an orderly transition to a competitive market and may include in addition to the directives in this act other provisions as the Commission shall deem necessary and appropriate to expedite the transition to full consumer choice. Provided, however, the Commission is expressly prohibited from promulgating any rules relating to restructuring the electric utility industry without prior express authorization by the Oklahoma State Legislature or the Joint Electric Utility Task Force. The Commission shall report all findings and submit all proposals to the Joint Electric Utility Task Force no later than August 31, 1998. It is the intent of the Legislature that the following principles and directives be adhered to by the Commission in developing a framework for a restructured industry:

1. Reliability and safety. Appropriate rules shall be promulgated, in accordance with the provisions of this act, that ensure reliable and safe electricity service is maintained.

2. Competition. Competitive markets are to be encouraged to the greatest extent possible. Regulation should serve as a substitute only in those circumstances where competition cannot provide results that serve the best interests of all consumers.

3. Consumer choice. Consumers shall be allowed to choose among electricity suppliers to help ensure fully competitive and innovative markets. A process should be established whereby some classes of retail consumers are permitted to choose their providers of electric generation services by January 1, 1999, and all retail consumers obtain the ability to exercise choice in the selection of an electric service provider soon thereafter. Consumer choice means that retail electric consumers shall be allowed to purchase different levels and quality of electric supply from a variety of suppliers and that every seller of electric generation in the retail market shall have nondiscriminatory open access to the electric distribution system of every retail electric provider. The Commission should ensure that consumer confusion will be minimized and consumers will be well informed about changes resulting from restructuring and increased choice.

4. Regulation and unbundling of services. Companies which own both transmission and distribution, as well as generation facilities, shall not be allowed to use any monopoly position in these services as a barrier to competition. Generation services shall be subject to minimal regulation and at least functionally separated from transmission and distribution services, which shall remain regulated for the present time. Retail electricity suppliers shall be required to meet certain minimum standards designed to ensure reliability and financial integrity, and be registered with the Commission.

5. Unbundling of rates. When consumer choice is introduced, rates shall be unbundled to provide clear price information on the components of generation, transmission and distribution and any other ancillary charges. Electric bills for all classes shall be unbundled, utilizing line itemization to reveal the various component cost of providing electrical services. Charges for public benefit programs currently authorized by statute or the Commission, or both, shall be unbundled and appear in line item format on electric bills for all classes of consumers.

6. Open access to transmission and distribution facilities. Customer access to alternative suppliers of electricity requires open access to the transmission grid and the distribution system. Comparability shall be assured for generators and other suppliers of electricity competing with affiliates of entities supplying transmission and distribution services. The Commission shall monitor companies providing transmission and distribution services and take necessary measures to ensure that no supplier has an unfair advantage in offering and pricing such services.

7. Obligation to connect and establishment of firm service territories. A utility providing distribution services shall be relieved of its traditional obligation to serve but shall have an obligation to connect all consumers in its service territory to the distribution system. As part of the restructuring process firm service territories shall be established as of a date certain in order to avoid wasteful duplication of distribution facilities.

8. Independent system planner. The benefits associated with implementing an independent system planner to develop and maintain planning and reliability criteria for distribution facilities shall be evaluated.

9. Consumer safeguards. Minimum residential consumer service safeguards and protections shall be ensured including programs and mechanisms that enable residential consumers with limited incomes to

obtain affordable essential electric service, and the establishment of a default provider or providers for any distribution customer who has not chosen an alternative source of generation.

10. Establishment of a transition period. A defined period for the transition to a restructured electric utility industry shall be established. The transition period shall begin no later than January 1, 1999. The transition period shall reflect a suitable time frame for full compliance with the requirements of a restructured utility industry.

11. Rates for service. Electric rates for all consumer classes shall not rise above current levels throughout the transition period. If possible, electric rates for all consumers shall be lowered when feasible as markets become more efficient in a restructured industry.

12. Establishment of a distribution access fee. A distribution access fee shall be established and assessed to all consumers in the State of Oklahoma connected to electric distribution systems regulated by the Commission. This fee shall be charged to cover social costs, capital costs, operating costs, and other appropriate costs associated with the operation of electric distribution systems and the provision of electric service to the retail consumer.

13. Recovery of stranded costs. Electric utilities have traditionally had an obligation to provide service to consumers within their established service territories. In order to fulfill that obligation utilities have entered into long-term investments in generation and related facilities to meet the needs of their customers, and have entered into long-term power supply contracts as required by federal law. These investments and contracts have resulted in costs which may not be recoverable in a competitive restructured market and thus may be "stranded". A process shall be established for identifying and quantifying stranded costs and assets, which shall not include transmission and distribution

assets, and a mechanism for recovery of an appropriate amount of prudently incurred, unmitigable and verifiable stranded costs and investments shall be implemented. As part of this process, each utility shall be required to propose a recovery plan which establishes its unmitigable and verifiable stranded costs and investments and a limited recovery period designed to recover such costs, expeditiously, provided that the recovery period and the amount of qualified transition costs shall yield a transition charge which shall not cause the total price for electric power, including transmission and distribution services, for any consumer to exceed the cost per kilowatt-hour paid on the effective date of this act during the transition period. The transition charge shall not disadvantage one class of consumer or supplier over another, nor impede competition and shall be allocated over a period of not less than three (3) years nor more than five (5) years.

14. Fees assessed on direct service. The Commission shall consider the establishment of an appropriate fee to be applicable when a retail consumer receives electric service directly from a transmission line. The Commission shall consider stranded costs and social costs as components of such a fee. The fees shall be in addition to any fees allowed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for retail consumer receiving service directly from a transmission line.

15. Transition costs. It is the intent that all transition costs shall be recovered by virtue of the savings generated by the increased efficiency in markets brought about by restructuring of the electric utility industry. All classes of consumers shall share in the transition costs.

SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 190.5 of Title 17, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

To ensure full evaluation and consideration of the impact of restructuring of the electric utility industry on state tax revenues the Legislature hereby directs the Oklahoma Tax Commission to study and fully assess the impact of restructuring on state tax revenues and all other facets of the current utility tax structure both on the state and all other political subdivisions of the state. The study shall include the feasibility of establishing a uniform consumption tax or other method of taxation which may be applied in a restructured industry. Provided, however, the Oklahoma Tax Commission is expressly prohibited from promulgating any rule or issuing any order relating to methods of taxation to be applied to a restructured electric industry without prior express authorization by the Oklahoma State Legislature or the Joint Electric Utility Task Force. The Oklahoma Tax Commission shall report all findings and submit all proposals to the Joint Electric Utility Task Force no later than August 31, 1998.

SECTION 6. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 190.6 of Title 17, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby created a Joint Electric Utility Task Force which shall be composed of fourteen (14) members of the Oklahoma Legislature, seven each to be selected by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The chair of the task force shall be the chair of the Senate Energy, Environmental Resources and Regulatory Affairs Committee and the vice-chair of the task force shall be the chair of the House Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

B. The chair or vice-chair shall record the members present at each meeting of the task force. If any member is absent from two (2) consecutive meetings, the position of such member may be declared vacant and the position filled by the original appointing authority.

C. A majority of the members serving on the task force shall constitute a quorum. The task force shall meet at such times and places as it deems necessary to perform its duties as specified herein. Meetings shall be at the call of the chair.

D. The task force may appoint advisory councils made up of representatives of various utility companies, regulatory agencies, industrial and residential consumers or any other persons as needed to advise the task force in any matter they deem to be appropriate and necessary.

E. Members of the task force shall be reimbursed by their appointing authorities for necessary travel expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with the State Travel Reimbursement Act, Section 500.1 et seq. of Title 74 of the Oklahoma Statutes. Advisory council members appointed pursuant to this section shall not be authorized to claim travel expenses.

F. The Senate and the House of Representatives shall provide such staff support as is required by the task force and shall be authorized to employ any legal counsel or other persons as necessary and approved by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

G. The duties of the task force shall be to direct and oversee the studies by the Corporation Commission and the Oklahoma Tax Commission as provided for in Sections 4 and 5 of this act and may include, but shall not be limited to, any duties previously authorized by Enrolled Senate Joint Resolution No. 29 of the 1st Session of the 45th Oklahoma Legislature and Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37 of the 2nd Session of the 45th Oklahoma Legislature and any other duties required to carry out the provisions and directives of this act. The task force may make final recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

H. The task force shall remain in effect and operate as herein directed until its termination which shall be no later than January

1, 2000. The task force may elect, by majority vote, to terminate its operations at an earlier date if it deems such action appropriate.

SECTION 7. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

46-1-0334

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